

A ROADMAP FOR EFFECTIVE INFORMATION GOVERNANCE

An effective information governance program is based on a corporate-level information management strategy. This article describes a 13-step process for developing the two key deliverables of this strategy: a strategic information management plan and roadmap.

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The records and information management (RIM) function is no longer sufficient to meet the demands placed on organizations by the current regulatory environment and by internal and external risk management expectations. A stronger accountability aspect needs to be added.

The emerging discipline of *information governance* – which is an accountability framework that includes the people, processes, policy, and technology that ensure the effective management of information to enable an organization to achieve its strategic goals and business programs – fulfills this role most effectively. This definition emphasizes IG as a *strategic* (accountable) function rather than as an *operations* function. It considers the input and effect of people (culture), business processes, policy, and information tech-

nology in ensuring the proper management of information and the proper balance between an organization’s compliance requirements (part of its corporate strategy) and its business goals.

Principles for Developing SIM Roadmap, Plan

The final component of the IG definition is very significant, as it presupposes that the first step in developing an IG program is to develop an information management strategy that is consistent with business objectives and balances those objectives with compliance requirements.

Information management is an enterprise-centric function that includes the compliance focus of corporate-level classification, consistent metadata, retention, disposition, e-discovery processes, auditing, risk reduction, version con-



trol, security, access control, and any other management functions that assist the corporation in proving due diligence of its information management program.

The two key deliverables of an information management strategy are 1) a strategic information management (SIM) multi-year roadmap and 2) a SIM plan.

Among other strategic tools, organizations use the Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles® (the Principles) and its complementary Information Governance Maturity Model (Maturity Model) to develop their information management strategy. However, many organizations face the challenge of how to use them to develop the SIM roadmap and plan.

The SIM Plan Design Process

The 13-step SIM process flow chart shown in the photo illustration on page 27 can be used by an organization's SIM team to design its SIM plan, which then will be the foundation upon which the IG function operates.

Step 1 – Develop a Company Overview

The first step in designing a SIM plan is to create an organization overview that will be used to assist in developing the Principles statements in Step 4. The overview consists of basic information about the organization, including such items as what industry it operates in, its strategic objectives, staff count, products offered, and geographical location.

Step 2 – Review the Four SIM Dimensions

To ensure that the design team considers all aspects of SIM when developing the SIM roadmap and plan, it needs to have a clear understanding of the four SIM dimensions:

1. People (changes to the organization, cultural issues, incentives)
2. Legal (policies and penalties)
3. Business units (revisions to business processes to improve information flow)
4. Information technology (use of software and hardware)

Step 3 – Complete an Infrastructure Questionnaire

Complete a questionnaire to identify and document the current status of the information technology infrastructure that supports the information management function (e.g., classification system, databases, indexing, information retrieval, auditing, e-discovery searches, and tech support).

Using the four SIM dimensions as a guide, look at resources, infrastructure, controls, and processes to understand what the starting point is for the SIM design. For example, the questionnaire should ask about:

- Organization and culture – Does the organization have a formal change management process? Does it have an information management advisory committee?
- Policy and compliance – Does the organization have a formal disposition process? Does it have a legal hold process?

- Business process – Does the organization have a program to reduce the volume of hardcopy information? Does it have a business continuity program?
- Technology – Has the organization rationalized its information repositories? What enterprise content management initiatives has it considered?

Step 4 – Write Principles Statements

Completing the infrastructure questionnaire will provide a multitude of answers that will need to be distilled down into a Principles statement that describes the current state of the RIM program for each principle. Each statement can be compared to the Maturity Model scope notes to determine the maturity level for each principle.

For example, a Principles statement for the Principle of Accountability might be:

There is no IMAC [Information Management Advisory Committee] or coordination between senior management and no regular auditing of IM procedures in departments. IM policy and procedures are developed at the provincial level and adopted by the client. Senior management needs to ensure training of staff in procedures. There is a senior management person responsible for IM, but the IM function does not report directly to that person. The IM committee currently exists with the mandate to develop and implement an IM strategy and solicit senior-level support. The organization meets level 2 maturity requirements; level 3 requirements for active strategic initiatives and senior officer responsibility are not met.

Step 5 – Identify Current Maturity Model Levels

The Maturity Model was developed by ARMA International to “paint a more complete picture of what information governance looks like.” The determination of the five current maturity levels and their plotting on the Maturity Model provides a baseline for determining what improvements need to be made to the RIM program and to identify those areas that need the greatest attention. The maturity level for each principle is considered separately in order to better understand the interrelationships and dependencies each principle might have on one or more of the other principles.

Step 6 – Complete an Environmental Index

Determining the desired maturity level for each principle requires understanding what targets would be most acceptable and achievable. The environmental index provides concrete indicators of corporate and staff support of, or resistance to, possible upgrades or improvements to the existing maturity levels. It documents how changes would be welcomed and what support can be expected. It measures risk tolerance, user appetite for changes, and cultural issues that may affect proposed RIM changes.

Create the environmental index by answering questions like these:

- Does the organization have key performance indicators related to RIM?
- Is the corporate emphasis on managing volume or quality of information?
- What particular employee culture or tendencies might affect proposed RIM initiatives?

Step 7 – Identify Acceptable Maturity Levels

Analyze the results of the environmental index and use that information to decide for each principle what increase in maturity level would be feasible and supported by all parties affected by the proposed changes.

Step 8 – Complete a Gap Analysis

The first step in achieving the desired maturity level is to perform a gap analysis between the current and desired maturity level. The gap analysis allows the SIM design team to determine how wide the gap is for each principle and what specific areas require improvement to reduce that gap. Then, the design team will be able to identify what projects need to be implemented to make those improvements.

Step 9 – Review Project Directory

The project directory is a mind map of all the possible RIM projects that could be implemented, sorted under each of the four SIM dimensions: people (changes to the organization, cultural issues, and incentives), legal (policies and penalties), business units (revisions to business processes to improve information flow), and information technology (use of software and hardware). Select those projects that would best narrow or eliminate the identified gaps that need to be closed.

Step 10 – Create Project Status Report

Once the list of possible RIM projects has been selected, investigate each project to determine its status (i.e., not started, in progress, or completed). Document the status on a corporate-level status report that takes into account other projects that might have been started by other departments and for other purposes. The status report will also document the purpose of the proposed project and provide the scheduling information that can be input into the draft SIM roadmap.

Step 11 – Design the SIM Roadmap

The SIM roadmap provides a graphic representation of the timing for each proposed project, identifies interrelationships between projects, assists in budgeting and project tracking efforts, and provides input into the SIM plan. Each project is organized within one of the four SIM dimension swim lanes.

Step 12 – Identify Required Discussion Papers

Some of the proposed projects may require standards or guidelines to be developed in order to successfully implement them or to manage their deliverables. It is also critical that all affected departments or interested parties have input into each of the proposed projects. Create a discussion paper for each proposed project that lists the required infrastructure and resources needed, documents its justification, and identifies the issues that it would resolve. The purpose of these papers is to provide feedback to revise the roadmap, to garner support, and to determine possible resistance.

Step 13 – Document the SIM Plan

The SIM plan is a summary of all of the SIM design team findings, including a proposed plan of action over a multi-year budget period. It is a written proposal to senior management providing a plan of action to achieve the desired maturity levels. It is a training resource and offers the justification for the proposed SIM budget.

Beat the Odds with a Long-Term Plan

In an Iron Mountain press release about its “2012 Compliance Benchmark Report, A View into Unified Records Management,” which examined more than 3,000 public, private, government, and non-profit organizations to determine how well their information is protected, available, and destroyed, the company provided some interesting statistics related to IG:

Ninety-four percent of respondents will apply more budget and staff to information management. The growing investment is noteworthy, particularly given the still uncertain economy. Yet, less than one third (28 percent) indicated they have a long-term, strategic plan with executive-level support for records and information management. Lacking a formalized, executive-sponsored plan, many organizations will continue to spend valuable time and resources struggling to implement and enforce effective, long-term best practices.

Experience has shown that the development of an effective IG function within an organization is not only highly desirable but is also within the capabilities of many organizations. Following the SIM design process can result in the draft design of a multi-year roadmap and plan within a relatively short period of time. **END**

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